



CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 15 : NUMBER 12 JANUARY 2006



Cornwall's Other Bridge

West Cornwall has its justly renowned covered bridge. That other bridge, the one at Cornwall Bridge, is not generally considered worth a pilgrimage. But now, 75 years after its completion (it opened on December 31, 1930), it has gained recognition: along with four other open-spandrel, reinforced concrete Connecticut bridges, of which it is the longest, it has been added to the National Register of Historic Places. Officially bridge No. 560, it was, according to Town Historian Michael Gannett, "a noteworthy engineering project for its time," and a contemporary newspaper called it "one of the finest specimens of modern architecture."

Granted, from the top, it's not much to look at. To appreciate its grandeur you have to go down below, where Cornwall Bridge village once was. There, looking up at the huge, graceful arches, the sheer massiveness is breathtaking. And if you go down River Road on the Sharon side you can get a good view of the whole bridge—the 180-foot arch spanning the river, with smaller arches on either side.

Built in 200 days at a cost of about \$425,000, it replaced the one-lane covered bridge, built in 1845, which couldn't handle the increased traffic on Routes 7 and 4. But in overflying the thriving village of Cornwall Bridge, it also, said Gannett, "sort of ended

its existence." Little is left to suggest a village. The covered bridge was washed away in 1936. The stores, one by one, closed. Only the station, a former factory, and an oil tank remain. Just one building was moved up to the new locale: Mabel Coty's Package Store, now owned by Richard Bramley. Merchant Harry Breen rebuilt his general store on Route 7. It is now Baird's. Other businesses followed later, but it's fair to say that Cornwall Bridge no longer feels like a village. As Gertrude Stein said about Los Angeles, "There's no there there."

The same fate almost befell West Cornwall: in 1969 the Department of Transportation proposed a cement bridge spanning the town and river in much the same way. But the townspeople united against it, and the plan was killed. —George Kittle

Businesses Change Hands

The new year opens with two of Cornwall's most familiar businesses changing hands.

Northwest Lumber was purchased on November 22 by Northeast Builders Supply, which owns several Fairfield County lumber and hardware centers. Northwest will remain much the same; staff is expected to be unchanged. One difference for old customers will be access to Northeast's product lines at their Fairfield County locations.

The business has been in the Sandmeyer family since the early 1940s. After his return from Vietnam, Dusty took it over from his father, Ralph, Sr. With his wife, Sandy, he expanded it into the town's largest employer, with a staff of more than 30.

"It's been a long, good run," said Dusty. "The business is in excellent condition, and we have a very capable staff; it seemed like a good time to hand it off." The Sandmeyers will remain in Cornwall, take it easy for a time, and move on to something else.

Denny Frost announced the sale of his excavation and landscaping business, effective New Year's Day, to Josh Tyson of East Cornwall. Denny will keep a hand in on a part-time basis "to help Josh get established and get to know" Denny's customers. Josh has been working with Denny on projects over the past two years to prepare for the change.

—Lisa Lansing Simont

CCS Teacher Contract Signed

The Cornwall Board of Education and the CCS Faculty Association have agreed on a three-year contract effective July 1, 2006, through June 30, 2009.

Teacher salaries are determined by a schedule based on level of education and years of service, to which is added a negotiated general wage increase. The agreed-on

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JANUARY 2006

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 NEW YEAR'S DAY Benefit New Year's Day Breakfast 8:30 A.M.—1 P.M. UCC Parish House Cornwall Taxes Due †	2 Park & Rec. 7:30 P.M. W. C. Firehouse Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Agricultural Comm. 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	3 CCS Reopens Inland Wetlands* 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	4	5	6	7 Town Hall Players Program 1—4 P.M. Town Hall †
8	9 Blood Pressure Screening 3—4 P.M. UCC Parish House Cornwall Youth Safety Coalition 3 P.M. CCS Gathering Room †	10 Expressions 3—5:30 P.M. Cornwall Child Center † Democratic Town Caucus 7:30 P.M. Library † Housatonic River Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library P&Z 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	11	12	13	14 Cornwall Association 9 A.M. UCC Day Room Town Hall Players Program 1—4 P.M. Town Hall †
15 Deadline: February Chronicle Copy	16 MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. BIRTHDAY (OBSERVED)	17 Expressions 3—5:30 P.M. Cornwall Child Center † Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	18 Film: <i>Occupation: Dreamland</i> 7 P.M. Library †	19 Toddler Time 10:30 A.M. Library † Bd. of Ed. 5 P.M. CCS Lib. Bd. of Fin. 7:30 P.M. CCS Lib. VFW Post 9856 8 P.M. W. C. Firehouse	20	21 P&Z Forum 1 P.M. (see p.2) CCS Gathering Room Town Hall Players Program 1—4 P.M. Town Hall †
22	23 Region One Bd. of Ed. 7 P.M. HVRHS ZBA 7:30 P.M. Town Hall*	24 Expressions 3—5:30 P.M. Cornwall Child Center †	25 Cornwall Vol. Fire Dept. 8 P.M. W. C. Firehouse	26 Toddler Time 10:30 A.M. Library †	27	28 Town Hall Players Program 1—4 P.M. Town Hall †
29	30	31 Expressions 3—5:30 P.M. Cornwall Child Center †	Every Week This Month: Mondays: Jam Session, 7:30 P.M. Village Meeting House; Adult Basketball, 8 P.M. CCS Gym Tuesdays: Adult Volleyball, 7—9 P.M. CCS Gym Wednesdays: Play Group, 10 A.M. Playscape/UCC; Stretch Class, 5 P.M. Town Hall; Tai Chi for Beginners, 7:30 P.M. CCS Gym Thursdays: Meditation for Mothers, 1:15 P.M. UCC Day Room Fridays: Story Hour, 1:15 P.M. Library Saturdays: Cornwall Community Ice Skating, 7 P.M. Hotchkiss Sundays: Kids' Basketball, 1—3 P.M. CCS Gym			

* Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

† Details in Events and Announcements

(continued from page 1)

increases of 5.02 percent (year one), 5.06 percent (year two), and 5.00 percent (year three) are to the salary line of the CCS budget (based on current staffing), not necessarily for each teacher.

The teachers also agreed to increases in their share of health insurance premiums and co-payments that will result in savings for the Board of Education.

The contract was signed on November 17 by Board of Education chair Barbara Gold and Faculty Association President Bonnie Burdick.
—*The January Editors*

Selectmen's Update

The newly elected Board of Selectmen (BOS) has been known to refer to themselves as the farmer, the grocer, and the vintner. They'll have plenty to keep themselves busy, judging from a talk with First Selectman Gordon Ridgway about his evolving plans for 2006.

The list shows the wide scope of projects for the months ahead. Some are works in progress, some are state-mandated, some are financed with Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grants, and some are federally funded.

Here's a summary: The BOS will decide by the end of January who will do the revaluation of property. Assessor Barbara Bigos has begun the data collection and market analysis for the revaluation and has set a timetable for the process. The new values will take effect with the Grand List of October 1, 2006. On-site inspections of exteriors will be done this spring, and notices of assessments will be mailed in November, followed by informal informational hearings for property owners. The Board of Assessment Appeals will meet in February 2007 to consider appeals and will mail its decisions in March 2007. The town budget and mill rate will then be set in May 2007, and tax bills based on the new values and mill rate will be mailed on June 30, 2007.

An Ethics Code for town employees and elected officials has been drawn up and will be distributed this month to those affected, to be followed by approval of the code at a special town meeting in February.

The selectmen and the Cornwall Volunteer Fire Department are surveying residences for compliance with the town's 911 numbering system. Homeowners with missing or faded numbers will be getting a reminder of the importance of this system for emergency responders.

The Town Office will have a handicap accessibility ramp installed in the spring. Alec Frost's design for the pavilion for the Route 4 ballfield (paid for under STEAP 1, \$350,000) will be available for public comment soon and is scheduled for construction in early spring. The land adjacent to the Hughes Library in West Cornwall (needed for a septic system and other building improvements), is being surveyed, and

purchase negotiations will follow (STEAP 2, \$200,000). A decision on funding for the expansion of the Cornwall Historical Society's building is expected by late February (STEAP 3, \$250,000).

The Emergency Equipment Grant (federal, \$20,000) will allow the town to update its communications system and obtain supplies for the emergency shelter facility at the CCS gym. These funds must be used by November 2006.
—*Audrey Ferman*

Beyond Politics

There are always stories behind the cold numbers of election results, but they're mostly predictable. Here's one that's out of the ordinary. It began when Rick Lynn, chairman of Planning and Zoning (P&Z), lost his seat. Democrats Lynn Cheney and Chris Hopkins were elected.

It was widely agreed that Rick had done a good job leading this important and sensitive board. He's a professional planner and was viewed as a valuable asset for the revision of the Ten-Year Plan.

Why did he lose? He did no campaigning, says that he lives a quiet life with his family, and perhaps is not well known. He also graciously added, "Lynn and Chris are very competent and likeable, and they'll be excellent members."

Is there another reason for the outcome? Although an unaffiliated voter, Rick ran on the Republican line, "because years ago the Republican chairman asked me." Election results reveal that, with the exception of Ralph Gold and Charlie Gold, no Republican or petitioning candidate came close to outpolling his Democratic opponent.

This, and the decline of the Republican organization in town is another interesting story—which we will leave alone except to observe that it almost certainly relates to the fact that many formerly active Republicans are repelled by the current national leadership.

So Rick lost, which is not quite the end of this story. Enter Doc Simont, a long-time Democratic member of P&Z. "I'd served for 12 years and was thinking of getting off, but it's a good board that was running smoothly, and I stayed on. When Rick lost, I felt it would be a win-win deal for all if I stepped down in favor of Rick."

And so in late November, the Board of Selectmen accepted Doc's resignation and appointed Rick to fill the vacancy.
—*Ed Ferman*

Town Plan Update

What lies ahead for Cornwall in 2006, 2007, or further into the future? The Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) will be working with town residents to revise and update our Plan of Conservation and Development, which the state requires every ten years.

According to P&Z member Rick Lynn, the commission has started developing the strategy. On Saturday, January 21, at 1 P.M. in the CCS Gathering Room, three professional planners will offer options for the process.

The public is encouraged to attend. There are new techniques that have proved helpful in other communities. Issues of affordable housing, sprawl prevention, and economic development for the tax base are all of concern, and there are creative ways to address these. Over the months ahead, the chosen planner will help facilitate plan preparation; there will be public forums and presentations; and the sense of what is right for Cornwall will be discussed.

The final plan needs to be approved at a town meeting. But the method of the plan's preparation is flexible: it can be all at once, or it can be incremental by subject—business, agriculture, housing, open space, etc. The individuality of the town, and its unique rural aspect that is home to an active and diversified population, should be expressed in the plan. Community input to help P&Z develop the basic strategy for plan preparation is the first assignment. The January 21 meeting is the start of that process.
—*Ginny Potter*

Welcome

Quinn McBath to Brad and Erin Hedden
Spencer Klaw to Sonya Klaw Del Tredici and Benjamin Kennedy

Good-Bye to a Friend

Bob Mott

Congratulations

Tom Heeter and Denise Covert

Land Transfers

Ganis Family Trust of 1994 to Ruth Charny Rotko, 12.03 acres off Kent Road, \$425,000.

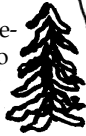
Bonney Brook LLC to 26 & 44 Kent Road LLC, property at 26 & 44 Kent Road for \$1,120,000.

Who Is Martin Ewen?

If you were among the throng at the Library's recent Talent Show, you'll agree that one performance towered above all others. Literally. With a blast of discordant music, there in the right aisle was a figure way up there on stilts. Mr. Long Legs. If you looked down at your program, it said "Martin Ewen." If you didn't, you watched the white-faced mime start to stumble toward the stage, outwit a few steps, pause, and then begin to dance slowly as the fear of failure yielded to a kind of kinetic inebriation.

Yes, *our* fear, *our* inebriation. Martin Ewen had the audience with him all the way. Tensions were stretched to the limit, then released in instinctive and uncontrollable laughter. The stiltwalker looks down at an ordinary folding chair with growing sadness as we realize that his advantage has become a disadvantage. Then, amazingly, the clown manages to seat himself. We breathe a sigh of relief—only to recognize, with the clown, that *he now has to stand up!* And, amazingly again, he does.

Martin Ewen first came to Cornwall five years ago, at the invitation of fellow entertainer Karl Saliter. He had traveled a long way from his native New Zealand. Back in 1983, he graduated from New Zealand



Clown School, where he majored in street theater, mime, and modern clown. By 1987 he was perfecting his stilt skills. Soon he was touring Japan and other countries. In 1991 he created the character he calls Lurk ("a twenty-first-century professional psychopath"), the stiltwalking persona that has toured the globe from Europe's largest nightclub to the huge Tokyo Dome. To all this activity add acting, directing, and extensive teaching assignments. Then add performances at—in Ewen's wry turn of phrase—"exceedingly high-end private parties."

Persons interested in Martin Ewen should visit his website. Increasingly, he has been turning his elevated impressions, visions, and revisions into short written pieces. "I am merely a clown who has used stilts as a means to distance myself from people...." His life is "the search for what is laughable and ridiculous in man." He sells T-shirts, mugs, wallet cards, and dead flies "contained inside a decorative plastic bubble with a signed, numbered identification sheet detailing the fly's name, its favorite smell and a favorite pastime.... Admittedly, its pointless nonsense but then so are you." (As are apostrophes, of course.)

Want to know more? There's plenty at www.antigravitytheatre.com. —Bob Potter

Selectmen Appoint

At their recent board meetings the selectmen unanimously made the following appointments: Inland Wetlands and Water Courses Agency: D. Stevenson Hedden, William Hurlburt, Roger Kane, Celia Senzer, and alternates Adam Fischer and Andrew MacDavid; Park & Recreation: Ron Laigle, Jr.; Planning and Zoning: Richard Lynn and alternate Emilie Pryor; Zoning Board of Appeals alternate: James A. Levy; Cornwall Grange Trust Fund: Chris Hopkins; Regional Mental Health Board: Wm. Earl Brecher.

—The January Editors

Interview with Our Judge

In the last 80 years, Cornwall has had only three Judges of Probate: Katherine Walker, Dorothy Bouteiller, and—since 1986—Margaret Cooley. We sat down with Maggie to find out more about her job.

CC: *Is there anything in your background that pointed you toward this job?*

MC: Various family members are lawyers, and a grandfather was circuit judge of the New Mexico Territorial Court. Before I ran for the job I was zoning clerk and had worked for ten years as a carpenter. I do have a law degree from the University of California, but it isn't required. I'd say the job is 10 percent judicial, 25 percent administrative, and the rest clerical.

What exactly is probate?

Probate is state supervision of the transfer of assets from the person who has died to his

:-) The Inquiring E-Mailer :-)

The question of the month is: *What is your prediction for 2006 on any Cornwall-related issue?* The editors hoped for a balance of serious and not-so-serious forecasts. We should have known better.

Russ Sawicki will replace Rick Stone as Animal Control Officer and offer an expanded menu at the Wandering Moose.

Because of the increasing influx of New Yorkers, Gordon Ridgway finally gives in and grows radicchio.

—Jim Fishman

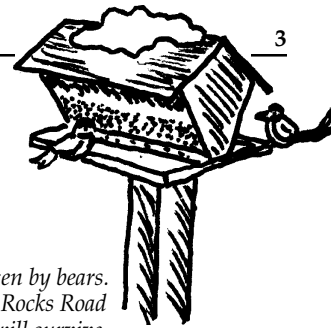
Amy Cady is jailed for refusing to reveal to FBI counter-terrorist agents what books Biffie Estabrook has borrowed from the Cornwall Free Library. "I can't imagine what they were looking for," she says as they lead her away in handcuffs. "The only books she took out in the past year were Snow Removal for Dummies and Goodnight, Moon."

—Hendon Chubb

The kids from Falls Village who have played basketball in our new gym will petition to go to school in Cornwall, which will mean another addition to CCS.

—Elizabeth Ridgway

The great tsunami of 2006 will sweep up the Housatonic until it floods all Cornwall below elevation 500. Few cows will survive and those



that do will be eaten by bears. Fortunately, Flat Rocks Road being elevated, I will survive, too.

—David Grossman

The Cornatucks, a minor tribe of the Iroquois Nation, will apply for and receive federal recognition. They will put the finishing touches on the ongoing Rumsey Hall restoration and convert it into a casino.

—Matt Collins

An MIT undergraduate from Cornwall will discover a way to heat a house by tapping into the molecular energy of raw milk. Debra Tyler, the Buddy Hurlburts, the Ralph Scovilles, and Ken Gladding will become instant millionaires who will form a consortium to buy up the old Rumsey Hall building. They will hire Halliburton to convert Rumsey into a large but tasteful and environment-friendly milk-energy (ME) refinery.

—Scoville Soulé

DEP will figure out that cars on I-84 have more to do with air pollution than dairy cows.

—Gordon Ridgway

Sometime around the beginning of April, Charles and Camilla will return to Cornwall to mark the anniversary of their excellent adventure here in 2005.

—Don Bachman

or her beneficiaries, being sure that legitimate creditors are paid.

Do most people have wills here, and how important is it to have one?

Almost everyone has a will these days. It's the responsible thing to do and the only way to make sure that things go the way you intend. It's also the only way you can spread money around to people outside the family or to charitable organizations, an easy way to do good that is often overlooked.

Do you need a lawyer to go through the probate process?

It really depends on the nature of the assets and the way they are held. A lawyer would be handy if you have a business or a complicated estate, and one is essential if you want to do some post-mortem estate planning, which you wouldn't want to try at home. In simpler estates, the need for a lawyer depends on the executor's comfort level with bookkeeping, form filing, and mild legalese. It also depends on the executor's personality. It can engage you while you're missing someone, or it can be the last thing you want to think about. Over the last five years the probate process has been streamlined, so it's no longer such a daunting process.

Does all property go through probate?

No. IRAs and other retirement accounts pass directly to whomever is named as the beneficiary. Jointly owned property such as real estate also passes to the co-owners without going through probate.

What is the cost of probate?

There is a sliding scale, and spouses receive special treatment. Fees for an estate of \$300,000 left to a spouse would be \$640; if left to kids, it would double. The maximum fee for any estate is \$12,500.

What happens if someone objects to the will, and how often does this happen in Cornwall?

Statutes allow only a few reasons for objecting to a will: if it's improperly executed; if there's evidence of undue influence or coercion; or if there's fraud. Although folks in Cornwall have occasionally whined about a will, none has ever gone to the point of a contest hearing.

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What are some other responsibilities of the Probate Court?

The oversight of trusts is one. Protection of children is another. When a parent can't function or has abandoned or neglected a child, the court can remove the parent as guardian and appoint another. These are thankfully infrequent, but they're time consuming and emotionally difficult. More common is the appointment of a conservator for people who can no longer manage their personal or financial affairs. It's a major event, as it involves the loss of many rights. Here in Cornwall, families are usually taking care of business without the court's help.

Two final questions: Do you have a black robe? Do you have a good will?

No robe, though I do boast two pairs of black jeans. And a pretty shabby will that leaves automobiles I no longer own to people who are dead. I'm revising it now.

—Ed Ferman

Events & Announcements

Shakespeare in Cornwall: The Town Hall Players will present the following programs at the Town Hall:

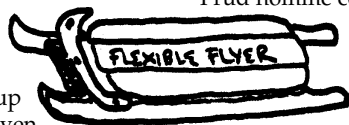
- January 7: "The Awesome Bard," an overview by Nick Jacobs.
- January 14: "Walk the Walk," stage movement by Adelka Polak. "Talk the Talk," language and voice techniques by Anne Jaffe and Nick Jacobs.
- January 21: "Work the Play," scene study by Nick Jacobs and the Players.
- January 28: Techniques and exercises presented by the nationally acclaimed Shakespeare and Company of Lenox, MA.

Programs are from 1 to 4 P.M.; contributions are suggested. Call Fred Thaler, 672-0052, for more information.

Toddler Time, a new, eight-week program at the Library, will start Thursday, January 19, at 10:30 A.M. The half-hour program is for 2- and 3-year-olds and parent/caregiver and will feature board books, finger plays, and music. Please call Amy Buck at 672-6874.

The January Effect

The stock market often goes up in January, and the reason given is this: People sell losing stocks in December for tax reasons. Then, come January, they re-invest, and the market goes up. So if you're overcome with financial ebullience, please share a little of your January effect with us. The market goes up and down, but the *Chronicle* is a sure thing. Thanks.



Park & Rec Will Sponsor:

• Ice skating at the Hotchkiss Rink, Saturdays from 7 to 8 P.M. Skaters must wear hats.

• Adult basketball at the CCS gym, Mondays at 8 P.M.

• Adult volleyball at the CCS gym, Tuesdays at 7 P.M.

• Kids' basketball at the CCS gym, Sundays 1 to 3 P.M.

Call 248-3009 to check on any cancellations.

Taxes Due: The second half of real estate, personal property, and motor vehicle tax bills is due January 1; payments must be postmarked by January 31 to avoid interest. No additional bills are mailed; use bills that were mailed in July. The tax office is open Mondays from 1 to 4 P.M. and Wednesdays from 9 A.M. to noon and 1 to 4 P.M. Call 672-2705 for further information.

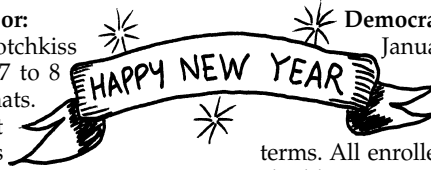
The Cornwall Housing Corporation (CHC) would like to acquire a five- to fifteen-acre parcel of land suitable for the construction of senior housing. Details, including form of housing and number of units, depend upon the results of a survey to be conducted this winter. In order to obtain government funding for construction, CHC must own or have an option to purchase the land to be developed. If you own or know of a suitable site for sale, please contact Jim Levy at 672-6377 or j.levy@snet.net. More on this story will appear in an upcoming issue.

First Library Read-a-Thon: The Friends of the Cornwall Library invite children in grades 4 through 8 to this sleepover event on Saturday and Sunday, February 11 and 12. The event begins at 7 P.M. and concludes at 7 A.M. For details and information please contact Bridget Lynch at 672-1076 or Deirdre Fischer at 672-1123.

Art in Cornwall: At the Cornwall Free Library, the show of Cornwall portraits by Erica Prud'homme continues through January.

The Outsiders Gallery will continue to display a show of rotating Connecticut artists through March.

Upstairs in the Gallery at Cornwall Bridge Pottery Store (in West Cornwall) is a show entitled *Pots from Paintings*. Featured are hand-thrown pots by Todd Piker, which have been inspired by and fashioned after pots and vessels found in paintings by Cézanne, Caravaggio, Van Gogh, Picasso, Pissarro, and Brueghel.



Democratic Caucus will be held on

January 10 at 7:30 P.M. at the Library to elect members of the Democratic Town Committee for two-year terms. All enrolled Cornwall Democrats are eligible to vote and are invited to attend.

Story Hour for 4- and 5-year-olds continues at the Library on Fridays at 1:15 P.M. Kindergartners may take the bus from CCS.

Motherhouse, Inc. is selling two created-in-Cornwall items: *A Field Guide: Seasonal Observations from the Fields and Meadows of Cornwall, Connecticut*, with watercolors by Ellen Moon, \$25; and organic-cotton market bags with silk-screened pumpkins in black, \$15. The proceeds will support Motherhouse's project to acquire Cherry Hill Farm for use as an old-style, life-skills educational center. Call Debra Tyler, 672-0229, to purchase either item.

Cornwall Youth Safety Coalition will meet January 9 at 3 P.M. in the CCS Gathering Room to review plans for the youth/teen health fair and to hear and discuss health-class curriculum ideas received from parents.

An Award-Winning Documentary Film, Occupation: Dreamland, will be shown on Wednesday, January 18, at 7 P.M. at the Library. The film is a candid portrait of a squad of American soldiers deployed in the Iraq city of Fallujah in 2004. Hosted by the Friends of the Library. Admission is free, and refreshments will be served. For more information on the film go to www.occupationdreamland.com.

Expressions, a science-based after-school program, will be held at the Cornwall Child Center on Tuesday afternoons from 3 to 5:30 P.M., January 10 to February 14. Children in grades K-2 may ride the school bus to the center after school. The program will explore the world using magnets, microscopes, scales, test tubes, and magnifying glasses. Call Pam Brehn at 672-6989 to enroll.

CORNWALL CHRONICLE

JANUARY ISSUE

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FEBRUARY ISSUE

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