

# CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 19 : NUMBER 4 MAY 2009



## A No-Chrome Budget

Ever mindful of the current economic environment, town officials have struggled mightily in preparing the 2009-10 budget to keep spending in hand while still providing for the needs of the town and school.

First Selectman Gordon Ridgway pointed out that Governor Jodi Rell's proposal for state aid to towns is still not finalized and is the "800-pound gorilla" to the bottom line of this year's budget. But by anticipating a \$60,000 reduction in state funding, and by postponing some capital projects, reducing or freezing salary increases, and changing health insurance providers, along with fewer Cornwall students at the high school, the proposed budget of \$6,055,747 is actually *down* 4.09 percent. As Ridgway says, "It's a budget in line with the times—no chrome" and, if passed, will result in a zero percent tax increase.

Copies of the proposed budget are available at the Town Office or can be viewed at [www.cornwallct.org](http://www.cornwallct.org). Vote on the budget and other items to be added to the agenda on Friday, May 22, at 7:30 P.M. at the CCS Gathering Room.

—Cheryl Evans

## My Mohawk Winter

As the last few stubborn patches of snow grow smaller on the summit of Mohawk Mountain, I take the time to reflect on my winter spent here in Cornwall. This past No-

vember, just two and a half years out of college, I found myself at a crossroads. Being uncertain which "fork to take," as Yogi Berra might put it, I decided to spend the winter with my parents, who recently retired to this small town in the foothills of the Berkshires.

After my mother's suggestion I applied for a job at Mohawk Mountain. (The idea of being a ski bum for a season secretly kind of appealed to me.) I heard back shortly thereafter from the Mountain, where they endearingly referred to my application as "Aussie," after mention of my recent travels down under. I was informed that I would be working in the Rentals Department.

What was meant to be a filler of a job to buy myself some "thinking time" emerged as the core of a totally transformative chapter of my life. Considering all of the jobs I have had (and there have been many), I don't think anyone could ask for a more upbeat office than the lodge at Mohawk. It was difficult not to smile while passing out skis to folks excited to go play in the snow. And it was impossible not to stifle a laugh when all the brave, brand-new skiers confidently stuck their ticket onto the front of their jacket (ignoring the sign to loop it through a zipper) and claimed they were ready to take on Nutmeg—only for me to discreetly inform them that their ski boots were in fact buckled on

the wrong feet.

After a few weeks on the job, I was asked if I would have any interest in being trained to groom the trails. Just to clarify, this means driving a huge mechanical apparatus named Bomber up and down icy inclines in the middle of the night to create that ideal corduroy finish that ski bums salivate over. Being the adept mechanic that I am (it's a good day if I can manage to fill my car's gas tank and check the oil), I responded with a resounding, "Sure, why not?" When I told my parents what I was up to, they didn't believe me. My mother sweetly informed me that she couldn't quite picture me operating a groomer. Of course, now I was determined to drive that Snowcat anywhere.

The first few outings were an adventure. Being the conscientious student that I am, I studied the instructor's manual in detail, making sure I knew every possible way to avoid tipping, slipping, and sliding—and thereby plunging—to a most unpleasant fate. Fortunately, I had two incredible teachers who had the utmost patience, sitting with me for hours as I crept along the Laurel Trail adjusting my cut depth and ground speed in hopes of creating anything that resembled a corduroy pattern in the snow. And, little by little, those squiggly lines in the powder did start to even out, and I began to really enjoy my hours spent with Bomber. I have never

(continued on page 2)

## MAY 2009

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>Every Week This Month:</b> <b>Mondays: Jam Session,</b> 7:30 P.M. Call 672-0229 for Location; <b>Men's Adult Basketball,</b> 7:30 P.M. CCS Gym <b>Tuesdays: Adult Volleyball,</b> 7 P.M. CCS Gym <b>Wednesdays: Stretch Class,</b> 5 P.M. Town Hall; <b>Women's Adult Basketball,</b> 7:30 P.M. CCS; <b>Tai Chi,</b> 6 P.M. CCS Gathering Room <b>Fridays: Story Hour,</b> 1:15 P.M. Library <b>Sundays: Meditation Group,</b> 1-2 P.M. 672-0229 to confirm					1	2
						Solar Workshop 1 P.M. Library † Corn. Child Center Auction 5:30 P.M. Mohawk Ski Lodge Family Contra Dance 7 P.M. Town Hall †
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Annual Meeting Corn. Hist. Soc. 8:30 A.M. Town Hall Reg. One Bd. of Ed. 6 P.M. HVRHS Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Agricultural Commission 7:30 P.M. Town Office	Region One Budget Referendum, Noon-8 P.M. Town Hall † Park & Rec. 7 P.M. CCS Library Inland Wetlands 7:30 P.M. Town Office				Annual Spring Bird Walk 7:15 A.M. †
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
MOTHER'S DAY	Blood Pressure Screening Noon-1 P.M. UCC	Housatonic River Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library P&Z 7:30 P.M. Town Hall			Deadline: May Chronicle Copy Iraq Moratorium 7 P.M. †	Opening Reception Lady Audrey's Gallery 4-6 P.M. † VNA Gala Benefit 7 P.M. Mohawk Mt. Ski Area † Family Round Sing 7:30 P.M. Local Farm Barn †
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Pick-Up Softball 4:30 P.M. CCS (First Session) †		Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall		Bd. of Ed. 5 P.M. CCS Library Bd. of Finance 7:30 P.M. CCS Library VFW Post 9856 8 P.M. West Cornwall Firehouse	Town Budget Public Hearing 7:30 P.M. CCS (See pg. 1)	Chess Tournament Cornwall Br. Pottery Store Children's Book Sale 9 A.M.-3 P.M. Library †
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Chess Tournament Cornwall Br. Pottery Store	MEMORIAL DAY Chess Tournament Cornwall Br. Pottery Store Memorial Day Observances 9-11 A.M. Children's Book Sale Noon-3 P.M. Library †	P&Z 7:30 P.M. Town Hall ZBA 8 P.M. Town Hall*	Cornwall Vol. Fire Dept. 8 P.M. West Cornwall Firehouse			Art Exhibit and Book Signing 3-6 P.M. Wish House †
31						
Farewell to Dr. Fitz 4 P.M. CCS †						

\* Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

† Details in Events and Announcements

(continued from page 1)

experienced anything as serene and surreal as being at the top of the mountain after all of the lights are extinguished and the skiers are home, realizing that it is just me and the moon in the snowy woods. Perhaps Thoreau was really onto something when he wrote, "There are moments when all anxiety and stated toil are becalmed in the infinite leisure and repose of nature." The crisp outdoor air and peacefulness had a healing effect on me.

Of course, the fondest memory of this winter for me is the incredible people I met along the way. I can say without hesitation that I have encountered the most fascinating and unique people here in Cornwall, from the ever-supportive, fun-loving group of girls I befriended at the Mountain to the flirtatious snowmakers and the management who care so passionately and are completely dedicated to creating a positive experience for so many. On a personal note, this little mountain played a big role in getting myself back on track, but locally I think Cornwallians should be proud to have this little gem in their backyard.

—Meg Savin

## Spring Peepers and Gentle Curves

"Careful when driving on Valley Road." That's what I tell my friends when planning their visit. They think I mean watch out for animals, but that's not it. Certainly Coltsfoot Valley is packed with critters who, by bad planning or bad luck, seem to find themselves on the wrong side of the road much of the time. Early-morning zig-zagging rabbits, foxes, coyotes, bobcats, turkey clubs, turtles, late-night ambling opossums looking sleepy and lost, skunks, molting geese who can only walk, beavers, snakes, raccoons, waddling porcupines, deer, spring peepers by the hundreds playing a real-life evening game of Frogger, moose, and surprisingly fast black bears. We have seen them all.

My warning to drivers, though, is not about animals. It is about people, since Valley Road is really a country sidewalk. Nearly flat, with gentle curves, great forest and field views, and a calendar-perfect waterfall, the road is an ideal walkway. There are regulars from an hour away who park in the valley to walk the walk. There are joggers and runners, serious and casual, fit or in serious need of exercise, in singles or groups, with and without dogs.

Folks with animals other than dogs also pass by. Heidi Hedden drove her elegant pony-and-cart rig down the road and on to our lawn one spring afternoon, while Chris Hopkins maneuvered a two-draft-horse wagon into our driveway a few years ago. Dan Gracey and neighbors move his five steers along Valley Road to and from their

winter home in the village and their pasture on the north side of Birdseye Brook. April Neubauer walks her goats on the road without lead or halter. They just follow along. We Cornwallians are an eclectic bunch.

There are also birders with binoculars who don't move much at all but stand, look, point, nod, and take notes.

Skateboarders make a grinding noise as they roll on the asphalt. Small kids' bikes often sound as though adjustments are needed. Jerseyed Lance Armstrong wannabes (always in groups talking loudly) go whoosh. Moms with babies in strollers usually walk and talk in packs of two or three, sounding so happy but looking so vulnerable. I see them and get concerned, thinking about the new driving visitors, or contractor trucks, or—most worrisome of all—too-fast-driving locals who from familiarity forget that we can't see around corners.

The valley casts a false fog of complacency and invincibility around most of its paraders. They walk shoulder by shoulder on the crown of the road. They bike on the inside of blind corners. They stand and talk in the middle of the pavement. They feel protected by the tranquility. They think they are safe. So do be careful when driving on Valley Road. Please! Pretend that just around the next bend are moms, kids, bikes, dogs, and, perhaps, a goat or two—all somewhat spellbound, forgetting where they are.

—Jeffrey Jacobson

## Welcome

Byron Clark Bell to  
Mary-Lee Clark-Bell and Terrance Bell

## Good-Bye to Friends

Elizabeth Locke  
Charlotte Frost  
Robert Terrall  
Jeffrey Gordon

## Recession Hits Home

Heading into the spring and summer months, Cornwall business owners generally remain upbeat and hopeful despite the recession. As with the rest of the country, many businesses seem to be holding their own; others are struggling against consumers' reluctance to spend money.

In West Cornwall, restaurants have seen a significant dip in business. Russ Sawicki at the Wandering Moose reported that his receipts are down 35 percent over the last two years, and he remarked that the majority of his customers are now from out of town. Dan Evans at Smokin' Barbeque said that they had a tough fall, but things have been improving since. He said that customers are looking for value, and Smokin' has added less-expensive comfort foods to its menu to compensate.

Bianca Langner-Griggs, owner of the

Wish House, said she had a slower-than-usual winter, mainly as a result of some events being canceled at Trinity Conference Center. Ian Ingersoll reported that he had a dramatic drop-off in orders starting in December and had to lay off a few employees. However, he said that business has picked up again, and he has been able to rehire. He speculated that the commercial side of his business—supplying furniture to hotels and restaurants—was impacted by banks' freezing credit.

A survey of businesses in Cornwall Bridge produced some interesting results. At Cornwall Electric, owner Ray Conti said business was down 30 to 40 percent but has picked up in recent weeks. Sales (and installation) of generators are up 50 percent, which has helped. Conti said he had sold off the plumbing part of his company, now called Cornwall Plumbing, and that the new owner, Joey Rogers, had hired two guys because business was thriving.

K. C. Baird said the deli business was down because contractors with less work lined up are not stopping in for breakfast and lunch. He has not laid anyone off or cut hours so far. At the Post Office, business was reported as "soft," down about 14 percent in mail volume and stamp sales. Postal worker Doug Wachtel said companies are mailing fewer catalogs.

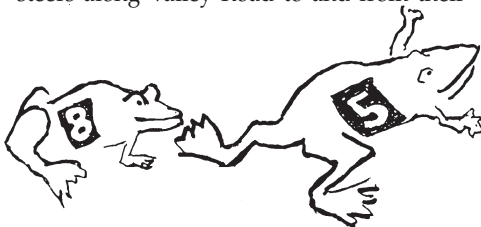
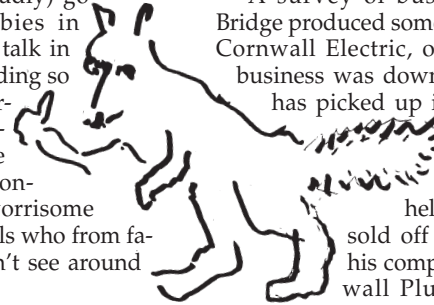
At the Cornwall Package Store, Richard Bramley said his sales are down because many of his customers generally cut back during a recession. He said this has been the case in all of the economic downturns since he bought the liquor store 30 years ago.

Housatonic Valley Rug Shop owner Ed Kenniston said store traffic was down 20 to 25 percent and that he had made no layoffs but did cut some hours.

Northwest Lumber senior manager Eileen O'Hara said home building is down and renovations are up, which means they're selling lots of paint and little lumber. She said three people have been laid off, and hours have also been cut. O'Hara noted that lumber sales are worse in Cornwall than in the three other stores owned by Northeast Building Supply.

On the building and real estate front, Nick Bruehl reported that business has been very slow, and he expects it to stay slow for at least another year. He said that he has had contractors—some he hasn't heard from for years—call him looking for work. He has been encouraged in the last few weeks as his phone has started to ring more, a sign that things may start moving again.

Will Calhoun said that he has not seen too much of a decrease in business, and although he has "downsized and streamlined," he has not had to lay off any of his core workers. He said that his clients are more budget and cost conscious than in the past. Other contractors have reported a variety of difficulties, however, from work drying up to current projects



put on hold or even canceled.

So far, these businesses have survived the difficult combination of winter and a deep recession. As Bianca Griggs put it, "You can't just sit around hyperventilating about the possibilities. You just keep going."

—Annie Kosciusko

## Recommended Reading

"Economic Development—Village Centers," a preliminary draft section of the new Town Plan, is ready for citizen comment. The Planning and Zoning Commission has placed copies of the 12-page document in the Town Office.

Chaired by Annie Kosciusko, the Economic Development Committee has met monthly for a year to consider the challenges and opportunities presented by West Cornwall and Cornwall Bridge. The committee held public forums in each village to collect input and has used concepts of town planner Tom McGowan.

A new proposal is to establish Village District Regulations for each center that would allow some flexibility with conventional zoning requirements: setback, parking, signage, mixed business and residential uses, etc. Additionally, there are recommendations regarding traffic calming and pedestrian walkways. Suggested for West Cornwall is a common source of water that would alleviate the siting requirements for septic systems. In Cornwall Bridge, the retaining of local "necessity uses"—the grocery, bank, hardware store, etc.—would preserve our small-town quality of life.

The "marketing" of the villages is needed for their economic viability. To assist with creation of a more detailed action plan, the commission has engaged a firm of experts to evaluate all aspects of the villages and interview a group of "stakeholders" who have businesses or particular interests. The resulting report will recommend physical improvements, suggest products or services that would have market support, and define the "sense of place" that can lead to an increase in economic activity.

Members of the P&Z Economic Committee, Todd Piker, K. C. Baird, Paul Baren, Bianca Griggs, David Grossman, and Jim La Porta, will be glad to note any comments the public may have on the draft proposal and the village centers.

—Ginny Potter

## Tamarack Beacon

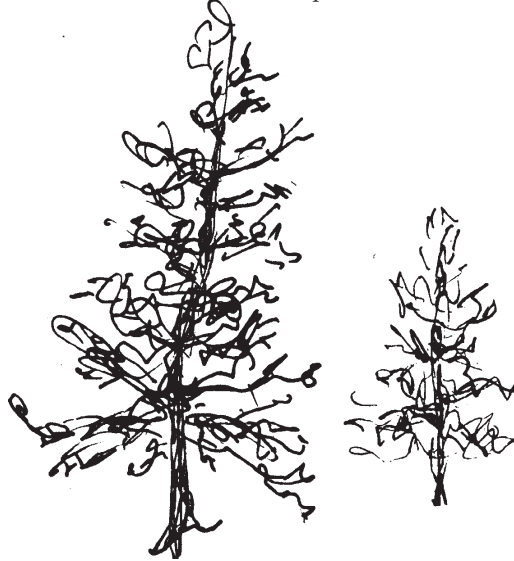
At the top of Cream Hill, where the horizon almost rounds the compass, a grove of tamaracks marks the highest point of the Gold farmlands. The stand of 30 or so trees grows within a rectangle of wide stone walls, separated from the tillable land.

Years ago I was told by my cousin Becky Gold Williams that Theodore Sedgwick Gold, author of the history of Cornwall, planted and walled off the grove around the time of the Civil War. The hillsides of the town were then barren of trees, cut down to feed the charcoal burners, and, Becky said, T. S. wanted to be able to see his land from

anywhere he happened to be in Cornwall.

Gold, who taught at Yale for a time, was a pioneer in the movement that established the first agricultural experiment station in North America down in New Haven. Arboriculture occupied Gold and his colleagues. The state's uplands had been stripped, and the soil itself was thin and poor. The forest had to be renewed, and the farms needed apple, pear, and peach trees, good producers for the pantry and the sale barns. Cream Hill and Cherry Hill by the early 1900s were dotted with fruit trees.

My mother, who went to grange fairs as a child, remembered the competition between



the Cream Hill Golds and the Cherry Hill Harts to bring the greatest number of apple varieties to the display tables. Dead polite and also dead serious.

But T. S. also planted the tamaracks, possibly as an experiment because Litchfield County is at the southernmost edge of the growth zone. The trees are deciduous, ripening to a handsome gold in the fall and making the grove all the more pleasing to T. S. Gold's searching eye.

The trees are old now, and stragglers have sprouted up looking for sun.

T. S. wasn't alone in planting a beacon grove. The Klug Farm in Torrington has a similar stand of tall pines next to the farmhouse. You can see them from Route 4 when you're coming down the big hill into the city.

Right there, that's my land.

—Lisa Lansing Simont

## You Gotta Have HUD

If things work as planned, Cornwall Bridge will have ten one-bedroom apartments for seniors with limited incomes "within two to three years." So says Maggie Cooley, president of the Cornwall Housing Corporation (CHC). The apartments would come in a two-building complex on the east side of Route 7 between Baird's store and the Firehouse. The key to the project's success is getting a grant from HUD, the Department of Housing and Urban Development. "That," said Mag, "means there are a lot of hoops to jump through."

The project was described in a beautifully planned program on a Friday afternoon in late April to a packed house at the Town Hall.

All the important information was provided by a team of presenters: Marie Prentice, Ella Clark, Will Calhoun, Mag Cooley, and David Berto of Housing Enterprises, Inc., who was hired to guide CHC through the process of applying for the HUD grant that would amount to over \$1 million and to help the Housing Corp. jump through those federal hoops.

There is currently no affordable housing in Cornwall aimed specifically for the elderly, meaning 62 years or older, with a top annual income of between \$29,000 and \$33,000.

The eventual renters will pay no more than 30 percent of their income for the units of approximately 540 square feet each. HUD would make up any difference. Each of the two buildings will have some common space as well as a laundry facility and handicap-friendly toilets.

"What about pets?" someone asked. The answer: one per unit and not over 20 pounds. Good for cats; not so good for labs and shepherds. The audience also got into such issues as lighting, parking, and security.

The subdivision plan for the property also includes room for two of the Housing Corp.'s parcel program lots off Dark Entry Road.

—John Miller



## Events & Announcements

**Solar Workshop:** Saturday, May 2, from 1 to 3 P.M. at the Library. Emphasis on the Connecticut Solar Lease program sponsored by the Connecticut Clean Energy Fund. To qualify, persons must own their own home and have a household income under \$130,000. Learn about state and federal incentives available and how to evaluate your home for solar electric potential. Sponsored by the Cornwall Environmental Task Force.

**Contradance:** Saturday, May 2, from 7 to 9 P.M. at the Town Hall. Bill Fischer calling and Still the Homegrown Band playing. Suggested donation \$5/children and \$7/adults. Refreshments to be served. For more information call 672-0550.

**Arts Fund Scholarships** are once again available for the pursuit of summer study in the arts. Interested students in Region One schools should contact Linda Peppe at 824-5774 as soon as possible. Applications must be postmarked no later than May 2.

**Budget Referendum:** Tuesday, May 5, at the Town Hall from noon to 8 P.M., for the purpose of voting on the Region One school budget. Absentee ballots are available at the Town Clerk's Office.

**Art in Cornwall:** The Cornwall Library will show paintings and ceramics by Sam Corwin from May 5 through June 6.

**Lady Audrey's Gallery** is taking over space recently occupied by the Northern Exposure Photographic Gallery below the Wish House in West Cornwall. Its grand opening reception will be held on Saturday, May 16, from 4 to 6 P.M., featuring a show entitled *A DeWolfe Hotchkiss Retrospective 1919-2006*. The gallery plans to be open Wednesday through Sunday from 1 to 6 P.M.

On Saturday, May 30, the Wish House will exhibit photographs by Deb Persson entitled *Horse Show*. There will also be a book signing with author Ann Jamieson for her book *For the Love of the Horses* from 3 to 6 P.M.

**Weekly Pick-Up Softball:** For adults and kids starting Sunday, May 17. Games will start at 4:30 P.M. at the CCS ballfield. Kids must be seventh graders or older, but sixth graders are allowed if they played on the school team. Questions? Call Skip Kosciusko at 480-2571. Sponsored by Park and Rec.



**Tenth Annual Spring Bird Walk:** Join resident naturalist Art Gingert for a birding hike on Saturday, May 9, at 7:15 A.M. Bring binoculars and water proof boots for this two-hour excursion, which is limited this year to

14 people. No rain date. For details and to register, call Art at 672-0077.

### Correction!

No, this time we're not correcting ourselves. It's *The Lakeville Journal* that goofed. Page A7, April 9: "The *Cornwall Chronicle* received \$10,000 [from the Cornwall Foundation] for costs relating to a future fundraising appeal." The correct figure is \$1,000. The coupon below takes care of most of our costs, but every five years or so we need a supplemental appeal to pay our bills. However, until that special fundraising actually happens, we still need money to cover our increasing costs, so the coupon below is as important as ever. Please consider using it. Thanks.

**Last Call** for all Cornwall high school seniors. Remember that the Woman's Society Education Fund offers first-year financial help for all types of advanced education. Application forms may be obtained from the guidance office at HVRHS or from Thalia Scoville (672-6288). The deadline for returning the forms is May 15.

**Visiting Nurse Benefit Gala:** The public is invited to a Roaring '20s-theme gala celebrating the Visiting Nurse Association Northwest's 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary to take place at the Mohawk Ski Area on Saturday, May 16, from 7 P.M. to midnight. The cost is \$125 and includes dinner, an open bar, and dancing to the music of the Scott Heth & Co. Orchestra. Call the VNA Northwest office at 567-6000 for reservations, visit the website [www.vnanw.org](http://www.vnanw.org), or send email to [bbeauchaine@vnanw.org](mailto:bbeauchaine@vnanw.org).

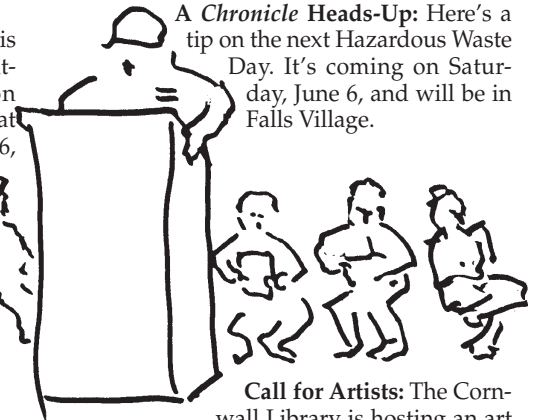
**The Cornwall Iraq Moratorium Network** will meet on Friday, May 15, at 7 P.M. Call 672-0183 for program and location. The contact is Jeanne Russo at 672-6089.

**The 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Child Center Auction** will be held on Saturday, May 2, at Mohawk Ski Lodge. Silent and live auctions begin at 5:30 P.M., followed by dinner provided by Smokin' Barbeque.

**Children's Book Sale** will take place on Saturday of Memorial Day Weekend, May 23, at the Library. Doors open at 9 A.M. for dealers (with a \$10 fee) and then open to all from 10 A.M. to 3 P.M. The sale continues on Monday, May 25, from noon to 2 P.M., followed by a bag sale of what's left from 2 to 3 P.M. The bag sale will continue for the rest of the week or until the bags are all sold.

**Memorial Day Carnival and Lunch:** After the parade and ceremony on the Town Green, enjoy food and games on the United Church of Christ grounds at the carnival sponsored by the UCC Christian Education Committee and the Cornwall Child Center. Devour hamburgers and hot dogs grilled on the spot, fresh salads, beverages, and ice cream; and join in games for children of all ages. Proceeds support Cornwall Child Center scholarships and a variety of UCC mission concerns.

**Farewell Dr. Fitz:** Cornwall kids, parents, and community—one & all—come celebrate the times we have shared with Dr. Fitz as she prepares to leave Cornwall and move on to the next chapter in her life. Sunday, May 31, from 4 to 6 P.M. in the Gathering Room at CCS. Lemonade & cookies will be served.



**A Chronicle Heads-Up:** Here's a tip on the next Hazardous Waste Day. It's coming on Saturday, June 6, and will be in Falls Village.

**Call for Artists:** The Cornwall Library is hosting an art show to coincide with its *Food, Glorious Food! Festival*. The art must have a food theme and be ready to hang. Drop-off at the Library will be from June 2 to June 8. Look for more details on the show in the June *Chronicle*.

**Annual Cornwall Open Studio** will be Saturday, June 13, from 11 A.M. to 5 P.M. Those interested in participating should contact Dave Colbert at [ourmaridog@yahoo.com](mailto:ourmaridog@yahoo.com) or 672-0064.

**Free Family Round Sing:** Saturday, May 16, 7:30 P.M. at the Local Farm barn at 22 Popple Swamp Road. Join in singing simple songs to create pleasant harmonies. No experience necessary. All are welcome. Call Debra for more information at 672-0229. Organized by Motherhouse.



### CORNWALL CHRONICLE

#### MAY ISSUE

Tim Prentice, Illustrations  
Anne Kosciusko and John Miller, Editors

#### JUNE ISSUE

Ella Clark and David Grossman, Editors  
[ellaclark@sharon-ct.org](mailto:ellaclark@sharon-ct.org) or [david144@optonline.net](mailto:david144@optonline.net)

MANAGING EDITOR Tom Bechtle

CALENDAR EDITOR Anne Baren

CIRCULATION Nan and John Bevans,  
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