



# CORNWALL CHRONICLE

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## How Good Is CCS?

Last March, eight Cornwall Consolidated School parents sent out a questionnaire to 152 local households with children currently or recently enrolled at the school.

What follows is a summary of the survey's major findings based on the 63 returned questionnaires (a remarkable 41 percent response rate). Space limitations and statistical nuances may create minor distortions in some instances. A copy of the completed survey is available at the Cornwall Library.

From 83 percent of the responding parents, CCS gets a favorable rating. Asked to identify the most positive attributes of CCS, the respondents favored its "overall nurturing spirit," with "quality of teachers," in second place and "ease of communication" third.

But the parent respondents also feel a definite need for improvement. (Nine in ten "overwhelmingly believe" in expansion for a new gym and more classroom space.)

Parents of children in K to fourth grade were more enthusiastic in their praise than those involved with fifth to eighth grades. Subjects receiving high marks included reading and upper-grade math and social science. But upper-grade English (especially spelling and grammar) and science generated considerable disapproval.

Unhappiness over classroom management and school administration ran fairly strong.

And though teachers were given credit for responsiveness to parents' concerns, the Board of Education was widely criticized for lack of "openness to community input."

Some of the more interesting results came from questions involving "special subjects"—including art, computers, music and physical education. Eighty-four percent said they were very—or somewhat—satisfied with the teaching of art, though one parent commented, "Please, full-time teacher." This level of approval was nearly matched by computer courses, with 78 percent in favor. Music, one parent commented, was "the best thing at the school." But though 60 percent expressed satisfaction, 27 percent turned thumbs down—perhaps because the music teacher is only part-time.

If the respondents to this survey had their way, mastery tests would get the boot from CCS. Only two of 57 respondents expressed wholehearted agreement with the suggestion that the tests are a "crucial gauge of the performance of our school..."

Mastery tests may fade, but "general homework" is probably with us for a long time. Still, whatever kids may think, it is somewhat surprising to find only nine of 59 respondents in any degree satisfied with their own children's homework situation. One complained of "unfocused assign-

ments"; another pointed out that not every household has a computer for research assignments.

Much less surprising is the 60 percent rejection of "entertainment videos" in classrooms during school hours, even at recess. On another important classroom management issue, disruptive classroom behavior, 52 percent of lower-grade parents feel it is under control while only 34 percent of upper-grade parents agree and 20 percent feel strongly otherwise.

When it comes to management, fewer than half the respondents, 42 percent, said they had a good understanding of the role of the Board of Education. Forty-five percent of the respondents suggested that the board should offer a "little more creative leadership," and only seven percent felt the board should stick to "primary business issues," e.g., money and labor relations.

Although some individual board members may have read the report, the full board had not reviewed it as of press time.

The CCS parents who prepared and distributed the survey were: Ruth Daley, Diane and Ian Ingersoll, Dominique Lasseur, Laura Macdonald and Richard McCarty, and Jamie and David Monagan.

To this writer, a taxpayer with no school-age children who has heard almost unalloyed praise of CCS for 37 years, some of the survey

*(continued on page 2)*

## SEPTEMBER 2000

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
3	4 LABOR DAY Hammond Beach Closes at End of Day	5 Park and Rec. 7:30 P.M. W. C. Firehouse Inland Wetlands 8 P.M. Town Office * 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	6 Play Group, 10-11:30 A.M. St. Peter's Church (p.4)	7 School Building Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS	8 School Bldg. Informational Meeting 7:30 P.M. CCS	9 Book Lists Due Library (p.4) Cornwall Cup Softball Games, 1-5 P.M. CCS Field (see August Chronicle)
10  Stretch Exercise Every Sunday 10 A.M. Town Hall	11 Blood Pressure Screening 3-4 P.M. UCC Parish House P&Z 8 P.M. Town Hall Public Hearing for Special Permit	12 Housatonic River Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library Democratic Town Comm. 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	13  Play Group, 10-11:30 A.M. St. Peter's Church (p.4)	14	15 <b>Deadline: October Chronicle Copy</b>	16 Bd. of Assessment Appeals for Motor Vehicles 9:30 A.M.-Noon Town Office (p.4) Cornwall Agricultural Fair Village Green (see insert)
17	18 Friends of the Library Annual Meeting 7:30 P.M. Cornwall Library Republican Town Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	19  9 A.M. Town Hall School Building Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	20  Play Group, 10-11:30 A.M. St. Peter's Church (p.4)	21  Bd. of Ed. 5 P.M. CCS Library Bd. of Finance 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	22 Preschool-K Story Hour 10 A.M. Cornwall Library	23 Cornwall Association 9 A.M. UCC Day Room
24	25 ZBA 8 P.M. Town Hall *	26	27  Play Group, 10-11:30 A.M. St. Peter's Church (p.4) Green Party 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Cornwall Vol. Fire Dept. 8 P.M. W. C. Firehouse	28 Cornwall Library Bd. of Trustees 4:30 P.M. Library	29 Preschool-K Story Hour 10 A.M. Cornwall Library	30 ROSH HASHANAH

\*Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

(continued from page 1)

respondents' worries and complaints seem important, others a little strident or hypercritical. Yet the enterprise seems to have been worthwhile, whatever its long-term results. That is because the survey authors' own deep parental concerns, echoed by the respondents', illuminate the few true bills of indictment, along with the more numerous belly-aches. Most importantly, the survey highlights the really wonderful things about our school. For Cornwall's elementary school children, how could "an overall nurturing spirit" and the excellence of CCS teachers not be splendid things?

—Charles Osborne



### Infected Bird Alert

West Nile Virus and Eastern Equine Encephalitis

are two mosquito-borne viruses which affect humans and birds. Most people who get the diseases have mild symptoms, but in rare cases the diseases can be fatal. However, birds die and therefore act as a warning that the virus is around.

If you find a bird that appears to have died within the last 24 hours from no apparent cause, call the Torrington Area Health District (TAHD) at 860 489-0436 and describe what you have found. TAHD will tell you whether they want to test the bird or not and tell you what to do.

If you are asked to retrieve the dead bird do not touch it with your bare hands. The easiest way to pick up a dead bird is to put your hand in a plastic bag, and use the bag to pick up the bird without touching it. Then seal the bird in that bag, put it in a second bag, secure that with a twist-tie or tape and store it temporarily in your refrigerator.

At press time there had been eight infected birds in Connecticut, all down on the coast, but the most dangerous time is just before the first killing frost when the numbers of mosquitos are at their greatest. TAHD will inform us if any infected birds are found in Litchfield County.

—Celia Senzer

### Bikers on the Tour de Cornwall

The hills of Cornwall are alive with the whirring of bike tires as a group of dedicated athletes go on their twice-weekly rides. Up and down they go, for 25 to as many as 45 miles at an impressive average speed of 17 to 19 m.p.h., on the roads of Cornwall, Sharon, Falls Village, and neighboring communities.

There are typically five to ten riders on each outing, which take place on Sundays starting at 7 A.M. and Tuesdays at 6 P.M. No kids these riders, as their ages range from 32 to 53. On a recent Tuesday ride there were eight men and one woman from Cornwall plus two visitors from Pine Plains, New York. Their route started from Cornwall Bridge, went up Route 4 toward Sharon and off on East Street (a continuous four-mile climb), then White Hollow Road to Lime Rock, past the power station and HVRHS and back down Route 7.

That was one of the easier rides.

Mike Root and Bill Gold, along with Jim Terrall have been prime movers in the group. They are joined by John and Jim LaPorta, Dwight Hatcher, Peter Busby, Jim Whiteside, John Van Doren, Bill Zekas, and Nora Hulton.

In addition to riding for fun, the group raised funds for the La Casa Project by getting friends to pledge donations for the successful completion of a 100-mile ride. Bill Gold says they will do a fund-raising ride again next year with an ambitious goal of as much as \$10,000.

Anyone who likes to ride and can keep up is welcome to join the group. Call one of the riders for information.

—Stephen Senzer

### The Great Walls of Cornwall

During a lull in the construction work on Route 4 between Cornwall Village and Cornwall Bridge, I decided to take a look at what the Department of Transportation (DOT) has wrought so far. I found the scene wonderfully deserted—no cranes lifting steel girders, no cement mixers, no trucks, and, best of all, no cops standing in the midst of things chatting and now and then gesturing casually to the waiting motorists. A sole worker was stooped atop the new 300-foot retaining wall, brushing on some preservative. "Think this wall will do the job?" I asked. "It'd better," he answered, "considering what it cost."

The winning bid was for \$1.25 million, 80 percent of which is federally funded, but the cost could rise to \$1.5 million, according to Project Engineer Linda Pregno. What we have gotten so far has been the demolition of the picturesque if somewhat dilapidated crib walls, built in the early thirties, and their replacement by two immense concrete structures faced with decorative stone facing called Rustic Ashlar. The longer one, some 300 feet long and tapering at both ends from about 10 feet in the middle, does, in the words of a friend who stopped by while I was there, "resemble a wall," but the other, a rectangular block about 110 feet long, "looks like a tomb." My grandson says, "It should have a statue on it."

By the time you read this, work will probably have resumed on the third and final wall, where the movable Jersey barriers have been. It will be almost the size of the longer one.

Was all this expensive work really necessary? First Selectman Gordon Ridgway, for one, doesn't think so. "The state, having repaired all the roads and bridges, looked around for other ways to spend the tax-payers' money and came up with this. I said my concern was not with the crib walls but with all the accidents on that bad curve that's banked the wrong way—twelve in one year alone. But they weren't interested in that, only in building big things out of concrete. I questioned the need to replace the walls, but too much money had already been allocated, so they had to do something. We did get some concessions, though: at two of the five sites where the crib walls were removed, the slopes were stabilized by grading. And the DOT finally agreed to do something about

that dangerous curve."

Spokesmen for the DOT say they acted in response to the wishes of the townspeople, and it is true that at sparsely attended meetings in March and May of 1998 some voiced support for replacing the old walls, and when someone suggested that a stone veneer would look nice, the DOT agreed. "Of course," says Ridgway, "there was no incentive not to do it expensively."

And so, work goes on. The third wall will take about a month. And that dangerous curve? "If we can do it in time to pave the road afterwards, we'll do it this fall," says Pregno. "Otherwise, it will have to wait until next spring." And if that's the case, we can expect more accidents this winter. But take heart: the DOT says that "this section of Route 4 may be reclassified as a scenic road in the near future."

—George Kittle

### Good-bye to a Friend

Philip Bishop

### Congratulations

Leslie Margaret Elias to Lawrence Howard Saed

Benjamin Cooley to Jennifer Konner

Thomas Baird to Elisabeth Lapina

### Land Transfers

Wolter and Haide Russell to Halbert R. Cliff, house at 96 Dibble Hill Road for \$270,000.

Federal Home Loan Mtg. Corp. to Stephen M. Smith, house and 1.12 acres at 303 Kent Road for \$70,000.

Frances G. Barnes to Bradford Hedden, 3 acres on Grange Hall Road for \$35,000.

Marshall and Elizabeth Blake to Bruce A. and Kathleen C. Vakiener, house and 10.4 acres at 192 Great Hill Road for \$850,000.

Albert Miles Clark to C & D Farms LLC, house and 2 parcels of land containing 107.8 acres on Clark Road for \$850,000.

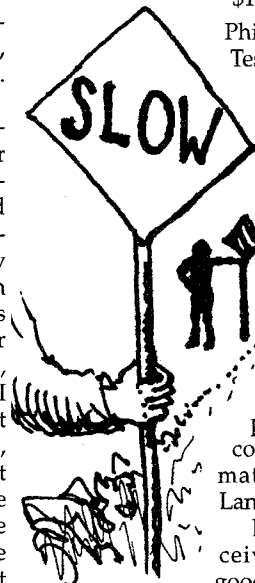
Marvin A. and Ruth Mass to Emily Moriarty Stone, 22 acres on Whitcomb Hill Road for \$100,000.

Philipp Kraker to Patrick Testa, house and land at 4 Frederick Drive for \$109,500.

### Upbeat Library News

If all goes well—including state approval and final revision of specs—the new library will go out for bids sometime in the next two months for a probable spring start, according to the latest estimate from President Lisa Lansing Simont.

Library trustees also received several pieces of good news:



- Circulation in July was the highest since they started keeping records.
- The Library received the Year 2000 Award of Excellence for Small Libraries from the Association of Connecticut Library Boards.
- The Torrington Foundation has given \$3,000 to help pay for the new circulation desk.
- Shelving from the Travelers Insurance Law Library has been donated, enough to furnish the entire stack room. The units are gray steel with mahogany end panels.

At their August 10 meeting, the Trustees voted to increase their numbers from nine to 11 and set the annual meeting for September 28, at 4:30 P.M. at the Library.

—Ed Ferman



### Garrick's Dream

Garrick Dinneen has a dream and he's got a plan to make it come true. He's going to raise, train, and work a team of oxen under yoke.

Garrick, the son of Bill and Vera Dinneen and a member of the sixth grade at CCS, works three days a week for Debra Tyler of Local Farm. He's been on the job "since June 23, 1999, at 8 A.M.," he recalls. His main responsibility is the care of the young offspring of the Jersey herd. Jump, a yearling ox trained by Garrick to pull a converted garden cart, was the star of the Fourth of July Parade of Wheels.

On a recent Saturday, Garrick led a visitor into the old whitewashed barn to see the calves, Petronella and Button, both of which he has fed and cared for since birth. Petronella, almost five months old, reached for Garrick's blue jeans and tugged and chewed. "She likes the taste of the soap left in the cloth," he said.

The herd rested in a nearby shed, their golden and ivory hides glowing, black-fringed ears wagging at the flies. Garrick walked among them introducing Ruby, Anne Arundel, Dulcinea, Kokal-Rose, Daisy, Dot Lee, Portulaca, Dee Dee, Pony, and Alisa. Jump, the young ox, lay in the corner and watched as Garrick explained the mother-daughter relationships among the herd. Jump has belonged to Garrick since May through an arrangement with Debra.

Alisa, now 18 years old, is the boss cow. Garrick and Debra gather the herd by calling "Come boss, come boss" and Alisa lifts her head and starts for the barn; the others follow along behind.

Five of the herd have been pregnant this summer. And this is where Garrick's plan comes in. He hopes that two of the calves are male and will become his dream team of oxen. So far the odds haven't worked in his favor; three of the births have been female. At press time, there were two more to go.

## Letters to the Chronicle

### ART SHOW STATS

A brief wrap-up of the Rose Algrant Art Show, held August 4 to 6, is as follows: 42 artists exhibited, of whom seven were new to the show; 24 artists sold work; total sales amounted to \$12,364, and the commission retained by the art show was \$1,854.

Prices at this year's show ranged from \$8.50 to \$5,500. Two of the artists have donated all their proceeds, enabling us to give close to \$2,000 to the UCC Capital Program Fund for use in renovating and expanding the Parish House.

—Bee Simont

### THE CASE FOR GUNS

To those who joined the anti-self-defense march [the Million Mom March]: no one was ever killed "by" a gun. A gun is an inanimate object incapable of a volitional act. People are murdered or commit suicide "with" guns but it is the person who causes the action. Had a teacher been armed at Columbine there would be several more children alive and whole today. (That is what happened in another school where the vice principal broke the rules and saved lives when he retrieved the gun in his car; the biased media never reported this incident.)

One of the celebrities who spoke out at the march recalled in Heather Dinneen's letter [July Chronicle], Rosie O'Donnell, has since had her bodyguard apply for a Connecticut Concealed Carry Permit to use a handgun in the defense of her adopted daughter when she begins school in Greenwich. Criminologist Gary Kleck of Florida State University and Professor John Lott of Yale (formerly of the University of Chicago) have proven that guns are used more times to defend against criminals than to commit crimes (usually without a shot being fired—my own daughter defended herself against a would-be rapist in just such a manner), and that when gun ownership goes up, crime goes down.

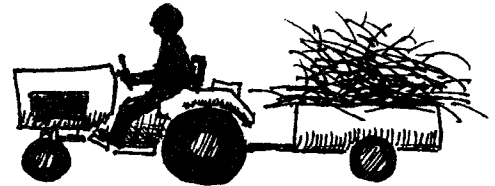
Of the alleged 12 "children" killed each day most are gang bangers aged 15 to 19. Gun accidents are at an all time low, 1,200 a year—lower than 50 years ago.

The best way to make sure that a Columbine never happens here is simply to follow the Connecticut State Constitution which states, "Every citizen has the right to bear arms in defense of himself and the state." This right, with which we are endowed by our Creator, is there to defend

With help from Art Hine of Harwinton, a retired 4-H expert on the raising and training of oxen, Garrick will carve his own yoke one day and train a champion team.

Garrick has other interests, among them playing the tuba. But, he says, "I will absolutely be a farmer. Going to the farm is the best thing that ever happened to me."

His boss, Debra, says about her helper: "I don't know how I got so lucky. It's a match



our children as well. It is so-called "gun control" that puts them at risk along with all decent citizens. Yours in Liberty.

—Monte Dunn

### LONGEST PALINDROME

I have too long neglected to pay my dues to your organization and in keeping with your palindrome theme (July issue), please find check of \$27.72.

Might I add that the world's longest one-word palindrome is a Finnish word meaning "soap merchant"—saippukauppias.

—Carl Peltoniemi

### WILDLIFE DIARY

8/07, 12:15 A.M.: Woken by fluttering creature at head. Think moth, brush off, return to sleep.

12:30 A.M.: Fluttering creature returns, again brush off. Feels and sounds larger than moth. Turn on light. Bat! Chase into hall, beat into submission with bath towel, ease into cookie tin.

12:45 A.M.: Return to uneasy sleep, dream of scene in Stephen King's *Cujo* where friendly dog chases rabid bat into hole and is bitten.

8 A.M.: Call doctor, who advises getting bat tested immediately; otherwise rabies shots essential.

9 A.M.: Bring cookie tin to Torrington Area Health District office. Bat is rejected. Accept only dead bats in clear plastic bags; judging from noise inside tin, bat still alive. TAHD suggests drowning.

9:30 A.M.: Return to Cornwall. Punch holes in tin, submerge in pail of water.

9:45 A.M.: Open tin, bat still moving. Drive stake through heart? No. Shove back in tin and resubmerge.

10 A.M.: Bat finally dead. Return to Torrington. Bat accepted and UPS'd to Hartford lab; will report in two days. Only two percent chance bat rabid; test 100 percent accurate.

8/08 to 8/09: Wait for report. More *Cujo* dreams, dog no longer friendly, much drool and foam.

8/09, 2:20 P.M.: Phone call from TAHD. Bat tested negative! E-mail good news to pal who is wildlife expert.

5:30 P.M.: Get E-mail response: "Hope rest of colony is healthy." Colony?

—Ed Ferman

made in heaven."

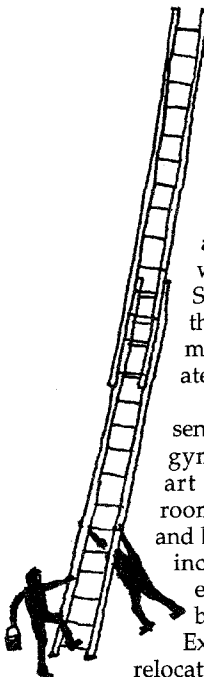
—Lisa Lansing Simont

As press time passed, the Chronicle learned that Garrick has just bought a pair of one-week-old bull calves from the cattle dealer who visits Local Farm now and then. They cost five dollars apiece and Garrick will be bottle-feeding for a while as the team gets used to its new home.

—The Editors

### Events & Announcements

**New Teachers:** CCS welcomes two new teachers for the fall semester. Geraldine Samela of Torrington will be teaching math and computers. Samela has a master's in middle school education as well as two years of experience teaching math at the middle school level. Suzanne Barber will be the new full-time transition teacher. Barber has recently earned her undergraduate degree at Central Connecticut State University and did her student teaching with grade four in a West Hartford school.



A third position—upper-grade English teacher—remains to be filled.

**An Informational Meeting** on the proposed school building addition and renovation will be held at 7:30 P.M. on September 8 at CCS with the School Building Committee and Friar Associates' architects.

Plans will be presented for the addition of a gymnasium, music room, art room, multi-purpose room/stage, new entrance, and bathrooms. Renovations include classrooms in the existing gym and larger bathrooms downstairs.

Expanded parking and the relocation of Cream Hill Road are also part of the proposal.

This is the first of two informational meetings, the second to be held on October 7 in conjunction with a Town Meeting.

**Cornwallians Teach Courses:** Beginning September 11, the Taconic Learning Center (TLC) is sponsoring courses by Phyllis Wojan (Contemporary Genetics) and John Leich (Advanced French). TLC is also offering courses in Great Ideas of Philosophy, Issues in the News, the Sciences (what's coming next), A Look at Modern Art, and Tolstoi's *War and Peace*. For information, call 435-2922.

### Dietary Tip

Never eat food that isn't spelled right. Corn Flakes and Shredded Wheat are okay. Cheezits and Froot Loops aren't. Tip courtesy of Jerome Doolittle's website, [www.badattitudes.com](http://www.badattitudes.com), which has other essential advice from his West Cornwall neighbors. Check it out. For this you owe us. See coupon.

[www.cornwallct.org](http://www.cornwallct.org) (the Cornwall website) continues to add new features. Among the latest are all 70-plus pages of the revised Zoning Regulations, and the meeting minutes of cooperating organizations such as the CCS Building Committee.

Future plans include adding a page from CCS, an E-mail directory, and more agendas and meeting minutes of town boards and civic organizations. Check the site regularly for additions, updates, and special events.

**The Board of Assessment Appeals** will meet on Saturday, September 16, at the Town Office from 9:30 A.M. to noon to hear appeals about motor vehicle assessments. No appointment is necessary, but bring any relevant documents.

**The Community Profile 1999 Report** can now be read at the Cornwall Library, Town Hall, CCS Library, or the UCC Day Room. The report covers the Community Profile hosted by the Cornwall Association on November 5 and 6, 1999. Questions or comments about the report can be E-mailed to [theballyhack@earthlink.net](mailto:theballyhack@earthlink.net), or a message left at 672-0281.

**The Cornwall Swim Team** successfully competed in the Housatonic Valley Swim League Championships, finishing a strong third.

Approximately 43 Cornwall children competed regularly in the youngest age divisions, about 15 swimmers in the middle division, but only four in the oldest two divisions. These numbers bode well for the future as the younger swimmers develop. The swimmers celebrated their season by swimming across Cream Hill Lake during the annual potluck picnic.

**The Friends of the Library Book Sale** will be held at the Town Hall/Library on Columbus Day weekend—October 7 and 8. Please leave your donations of books, videos, tapes, and CDs at the library any time between now and October 4. The Friends also need volunteers to help set up and sort books on October 4, 5, and 6 and to sell on October 7 and 8. Please call Celia Senzer at 672-6898.

**Community Birthday Calendar:** The Republican Town Committee, as a fundraiser for the Washington Internship Program, is selling Cornwall Birthday Calendars. The calendars cost \$5 each and this includes your family's entries (birthdays and anniversaries) on the calendar. The deadline is Monday, September



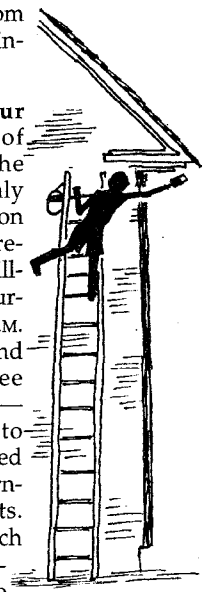
11. For more information and to purchase calendars, contact K. C. Baird at Baird's Store or call Annie Kosciusko at 672-6406.

**Cornwall Play Group** begins September 6 and meets every Wednesday during the school year. We gather in the basement of St. Peter's Church in Cornwall Village at 10 A.M. Babies, toddlers, and preschool-age children are welcome when accompanied by a parent or care-giver. Come on September 6 with your ideas for play group so we can plan fall activities such as crafts, music, and field trips. Any questions? Please call Emilie Pryor at 672-4226.

**Art in Cornwall:** At the Cornwall Library the exhibit of Ruth Gannett's prints and original drawings will continue until September 23. Opening September 25, and continuing through October, will be a show of works on paper by Duncan Hannah.

At the Wish House, Joan Hinchman's exhibit of photographs from around the world continues through September.

**Cornwall House Tour 2000** for the benefit of Prime Time House, the Northwest Corner's only psychosocial rehabilitation clubhouse for people recovering from a mental illness, will be held on Saturday, October 7, from 11 A.M. to 4 P.M. Tim Prentice and the Benefit Committee have lined up 6 homes—Colonial to Victorian to Contemporary—and need room volunteers for morning and afternoon shifts. Volunteers may visit each house and attend the reception following the tour as guests of the benefit committee. Please call Amy Cady at 672-0233.



**"Dive Into Reading" Book Lists** may be delivered to the Library until September 9, and children will receive their earned prizes from the fish bowl and treasure chest. Further, a grand total of all books read this summer will be translated by sponsors into \$1 per book toward our new library building.

### CORNWALL CHRONICLE

ILLUSTRATIONS *Dean Potter*  
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